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## Creating an online English course for Redlands High School

Joshua Miguel Alejandro Murguia

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CREATING AN ONLINE ENGLISH COURSE  
FOR REDLANDS HIGH SCHOOL

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A Project  
Presented to the  
Faculty of  
California State University,  
San Bernardino

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts  
in  
Education:  
Instructional Technology

---

by  
Joshua Miguel Alejandro Murguia  
September 2003

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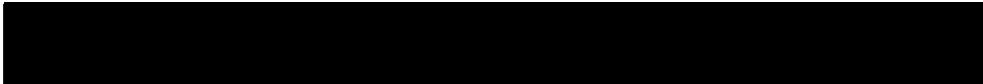
by  
Joshua Miguel Alejandro Murguia  
September 2003

Approved by:



Eun-Ok Baek, Ph.D., First Reader

8/20/03  
Date



Amy S.C. Leh, Ph.D., Second Reader

## ABSTRACT

Redlands High School (RHS) is one of the top performing high schools in San Bernardino County as well as the state of California. One of the reasons that RHS continues to be a high achieving school is its focus on working in the best interests of its student population. The staff and administration at RHS tend to avoid any quick fixes for problems that they may have, but rather the administration and staff are determined to find the best and most effective way to teach, enhance learning, and present an overall enjoyable experience for all students. There are factors however that often impede even the best intentions of a school as successful as RHS. With continued budget cuts in education, properly funding even the necessary or required aspects of the day-to-day goings on in an average high school has become increasingly difficult. Add to this a growing population of students with a limited amount of space, and the need for changes quickly becomes evident.

I propose therefore, to work with both the strength of the RHS focus on better achievement and its need for tighter money management by creating an online course for English 12. It is my hope that such a project will not only run in line with the school's focus on preparing

students for the educational and professional world of tomorrow, but also help to curb some of the costs the school faces in offering the basic, in class curriculum.

## DEDICATION

First and foremost I would like to dedicate completion of my Master's thesis to my wife Melissa and my children Trent and Gabriella. I know how difficult it was for them to have me gone at school two or more nights a week and I truly appreciate their understanding and support. Secondly I would like to thank my classmates in the ETEC program. They were all helpful and supportive and I definitely feel that I could not have completed this program without them. Finally I would like to thank the staff and administration at Redlands High School and the Redlands Unified School District office. If at any point during this project I needed help I received it openly and in a timely manner.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### BACKGROUND

#### Introduction

Redlands Unified School District has two mainstream high schools (Redlands High School and Redlands East Valley High School) along with one continuation high school (Orangewood High School). These three campuses host approximately 6,500 high school students. Both of the mainstream high schools are at or above capacity. RHS, one of the oldest high schools in the state, has been over its capacity for some time and has had to add portable classrooms to accommodate the increasing number of students at its school. Redlands East Valley is already at capacity and it is only six years old. To add to those staggering numbers is the fact that the population of incoming students continues to grow steadily.

The Redlands school district however, has had strong community support and there are a number of initiatives that are allocating funds towards the building of new schools within the district as well as modernization funds delegated to several of the older schools, including RHS. One of the proposed new schools will be a high school, but it is not set to open until the fall of 2007 (B. Klein,

e-mail, March 11, 2003). The problem is though, how is the district supposed to accommodate another four years of increasing student population with school sites that are already over capacity?

### Purpose of the Project

The purpose of the project was to develop an online course in the hopes of cutting some of the costs of the typical "brick and mortar" class while at the same time offering senior students the opportunity to take a class outside of the physical campus. RHS has several advanced technology courses and also works with the federally funded Virtual High Tech High grant. This grant offers a "school within a school" setting in which students do the vast majority of their work on computers and online. A district as forward thinking as Redlands Unified is obviously looking to the next step in all aspects of education, why not distances education?

### Questions/Hypotheses

The questions/hypotheses are what it would take to create an effective and supportive online course for English 12. If an online course were properly designed, and it met the local, county and state requirements for earning credit, could such a course be implemented on a

trial basis in the hopes of saving the district money, opening up additional classroom space, and at the same time provide students with a valuable learning experience? If that is the case, the question is truly about the site and whether or not the students find its usability comparable to that of a face-to-face class. If they do, then justifying a trial basis would be the next logical step.

### Significance of the Project

The significance of the project comes from our own college campuses. A number of studies have shown distance education to not only be the "wave of the future" for the K-12 classroom, but also a cost effective way of working around the limitations of an ever-shrinking state education budget. "More than 50 percent of U.S. high schools are currently offering online courses or exploring them for the future" (CyberAtlas Staff, 2002, p. 1). Consider the possibilities of financial help that an online course would offer the average high school. To begin with, there would be increased space availability once students were allowed to work from their homes. Additionally, resource costs such as the basic office supplies needed for the classroom, the amount of copies

made to support an average course curriculum, and the costs of textbooks would be significantly lowered. More and more textbook publishers are offering online or digital versions of their texts and those numbers are sure to increase. Most of the publishers even offer online tutorials and support for students. An online course would lend itself perfectly to the use of such resources.

Finally, there is the idea of the logical next step for education. Anymore these days, it is difficult to find a subject that one cannot find being taught through an online course. Driver's education is taught online and one can even find online tutorials for writing abstracts to thesis papers. The majority of colleges in the United States offer at least a small portion of their courses online and the number is increasing exponentially. In the professional workplace, more and more of the basic training is done through digital or online tutorials. If we as educators are working towards preparing our students for the future, offering them the opportunity to take online courses can only help them, not hurt them. It may be true that students lose a certain amount of interaction with their classmates and with their teachers; but one can hardly ignore the changing world of post-secondary education and the changing workplace of tomorrow. Taking

an online course in high school offers students a realistic taste of what the future holds for them.

#### Limitations

During the development of the project, a number of limitations were noted. These limitations are the following:

1. The main limitation is the time to do more than one study and to properly evaluate the costs/benefits of an online course at the K-12 level. There are a number of arguments for and against K-12 distance education and because this is a fairly new concept, the long-term costs/benefits have not as yet been determined.
2. An additional limitation is the testing of the site itself for curriculum development. While the site will be tested for usability, this test will be brief and really only test the mechanics of the site. Most students are reluctant to chance their units on a "for credit" trial run of some part of the curriculum that could adversely affect their grades.

### Definition of Terms

The following terms are defined as they apply to the project.

- 1) Online Course: For the purpose of this study, an online course would be one that was almost exclusively completed by students in an online environment. While it is highly likely that some face-to-face time would be expected by the school and/or the district, most of the day-to-day work would not be completed on campus.
- 2) Costs: For the purpose of this study, costs refer to both the monies needed to set up and maintain an online course (i.e. software, servers, etc.) and the routine costs associated with maintaining a class on the school campus.

## CHAPTER TWO

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

#### The Cost Advantages of Distance Education

Initially, the start up costs for an online course can be substantial, but once that is completed, the costs of an online course should decrease significantly as more resources catering to online classes become available. According to Linda McIntruff, the principal of CyberSchool Academy, "more families will choose virtual schools like the academy because of its flexibility and the ability to meet the need of the individual child...from an administrative point of view, the costs of education online tend to be less; less overhead for facilities and maintenance, less for other expenditures" (Sistek-Chandler, 2003, p. 2). Additionally, it makes more sense to administrators who have been forced to look at a decreasing number of credentialed teachers and a decreasing budget. "Many have turned to online learning to cost-effectively supplement traditional education" (mnvu, 2003, p. 1). Other areas of the daily running of a high school also benefit from online courses. "Among the top reasons cited were...college preparation/Advanced Placement offering...and resolving scheduling conflicts"

(CyberAtlas Staff, 2002, p. 3). Their costs may not be measurable in dollars and cents, but the average administrator can quickly surmise the true worth with little effort.

### Learning and Teaching Styles

"Web-based courses offered by trained, highly qualified teachers have the potential of successfully meeting this need [the need for career and technical virtual high schools]" (Pittinger, 2003, p. 1). Obviously there is a need, but what concerns most teachers and students is who will best succeed in an online class and who is "qualified" to teach an online class.

One way to determine who might be successful in an online class is to look at the basic learning styles that apply to the regular classroom setting. The typical visual, auditory, and kinesthetic styles all have their place in the online learning environment to an extent. "All of us utilize all three types of learning, but most people display a preference for one over the other two. In early life the split amongst the overall population is fairly even, but by adulthood the visual side has become more dominant" (Ways of looking at style, 2003, p. 2). It is up to the teacher to meet the requirements for each



style. "For example, introverted students often find it easier to communicate via computer-mediated communication than in face-to-face situations" (University of Illinois, 2001, p. 1). One site, the Virtual Academy even took the classic learning styles a step further and asked potential students a list of questions about what they enjoy in the classroom, called their "What is Your Learning Style? Quiz," and then offered to the teacher an example of what type of course would work best. For example, if the student preferred "Discussions with class members" they would suggest "A well functioning meeting" (Dunn, 1992, p. 1). In the page "Learning Styles" from World Wide Learn, learning is simply broken down into two categories, active learning and passive learning. While one might assume that the active learning style with its "combination of doing and speaking about what we learn" would not work out so well in the online learning environment; but the opposite is true (World Wide Learn, 2003, p. 1) The active learning style lends itself well to online learning in that most of the successful students in such an environment need to have the responsibility to work at their own pace, and this learning style fosters that. At the same time however, the passive learning style cannot be discounted either. "In an online class there is

a lot of passive learning done through reading text, listening to audio clips, and seeing graphics" (World Wide Learn, 2003, p. 2). All told, while it may be more difficult to incorporate the kinesthetic style of learning, it can be done and just as with a brick and mortar class, a combination of learning styles needs to be addressed when constructing a class.

After an educator has determined the types of learning styles that are most prevalent in his/her students, or has made adjustments in his/her curriculum to accommodate all or most of the various learning styles, the next step an educator needs to take is trying to understand his/her own teaching style. Most educators fall into one of two styles, formal authority or facilitator; though there are several others to consider. In a formal authority approach, "planning focuses on content. The instructor defines the theories, principles, concepts, or terms that students need to learn and organizes them into a sequenced set of goals and objectives" (Indiana State University, 2003, p. 1). This is a simplistic method that involves very straight forwards curriculum development. "The lesson plan outlines the action steps by which the goals are achieved" (Indiana State University, 2003, p. 1). Alternatively, in the facilitator approach,

"curriculum planning focuses on learning processes" (Indiana State University, 2003, p. 1). Although many students prefer this type of teaching style, it can be more difficult to translate into an online learning environment. "This commitment is based on the assumption that a student who learns how to learn a subject is far more competent than someone who repeats facts or theories verbatim" (Indiana State University, 2003, p. 1). Both teaching styles have their place in online education, but very likely the K-12 level would need a more formal authority approach in order to help with the students' need for exact parameters of their assignments.

"A faculty member's style affects how information is displayed, how student interaction occurs, how classroom tasks are carried out, and how assessment occurs" (Colaric, 2002, p. 1). This quote from "Portraying Yourself Online: A Discussion of Teaching Styles in Online Courses" sums up perfectly the dilemma faced by most educators when considering teaching an online course. In her paper, Dr. Colaric involved four faculty members who were teaching online courses with varying success. She asked them to define their teaching philosophies as well as explain their views on online instruction. What comes about is would certainly help any instructor with his/her

questions about how their teaching style will affect or translate to an online course.

In referring to her own teaching style, Dr. Colaric says,

My face-to-face and online courses are fairly similar. Both rely on the assumption that students will obtain the basic content information independently and the role of the class is to have students define, describe, and modify that information until it becomes knowledge. (Colaric, 2002, p. 2)

Most teachers would probably agree that Dr. Colaric's assumption is similar to their own feelings about how a class should be run. The question though, is how to translate that idea into an online course. To assist in this, Dr. Colaric stresses class participation through online discussions and she keeps a rigid and set curriculum for the class. "All students move through the class at the same pace based on two-week modules; this definitely isn't a self-paced course. And I model appropriate communication strategies throughout the course" (Colaric, 2002, p. 2).

This seems to be a common theme in online development. Most of the sources on the topic suggest an evenly paced curriculum that encourages participation, but that ultimately leads to a student who is self-directed to complete his/her tasks. In essence, the ideal curriculum

and teaching styles incorporate elements from both the formative and facilitator approaches. What seems most important is that both the student and the teacher be honest and realistic about what each expects from the course. Being able to understand the expectations of each party will make the experience more beneficial and more enjoyable for each. One of Dr. Colaric's subjects, Dr. Steinweg, included the following summary to consider when evaluating curriculum and teaching styles; "What I am beginning to see is that I don't have to change my style to teach online. I just have to explore and find ways to use technology that allow me to do what I want to do" (Colaric, 2003, p.4).

#### Statistics Associated with Distance Education at the K-12 and Post-Secondary Education Levels

There is no denying it, online or distance education is no longer the "next big thing" in education, it is here and it is expected at the high school and college levels and in the business world. Aside from the 50% of high schools offering or considering online courses "Another 17 percent are interested in offering online courses in the future...32 percent of polled school districts will adopt [adopted] and use an e-learning platform for the first time in 2002" (CyberAtlas Staff, 2002, p. 1). This trend

is more evident at the college level. "It is predicted that by 2005, 90 percent of American universities will offer at least one course online" (Charp, 2002, p. 1). Finally, if a student feels that college is not his/her choice, he she may have a rude awakening in the professional workforce. "E-learning is expanding worldwide. It is estimated that corporate training will grow from \$2.2 billion to \$18.5 billion by 2005" (Charp, 2002, p. 1).

It is not just the number of courses increasing either; it is the type of online course as well. Consider how much information one can find on any given subject when doing an online search through any of the more reputable search engines. Thousands of options are available. Now take that same information and put it into any course one might be interested in taking. As an example of how far this can go, think of this, "The foremost authority in the world is teaching the subject online, and because courses will be offered twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, there will be learners from all around the world" (Purpletrain, 2002, p. 1). The possibilities are endless. This is especially the case when one considers the state of funding for education. With more and more "unnecessary" programs being cut, the

overall learning experience that the average student receives in a public school continues to appear more dismal. If we are able to infuse more information and offer a variety of learning experiences, would it not be worth it to enhance student classroom time just that much? On top of that, why not prepare high school students for such a learning environment before they graduate?

### Summary

The literature important to the project was presented in Chapter Two. When considering the idea of creating an online course one must consider the economic benefits/ costs of such a course, the student types and methods of instructions that will best make the class a success, and the overall possibility that the class will actually prepare students for school and work after high school.

## CHAPTER THREE

### DESIGN

#### Introduction

Chapter Three documents the steps used in developing the project. Specifically, this chapter will be an overview of the recruitment of potential students, local and state requirements, curriculum design, page presentation, implementation, evaluation, and summary.

#### Analysis

Considering what it takes to devise a basic, in-class course is a daunting task in and of itself. Taking that same course and offering it online adds a whole new dimension to the planning process. As an educator, one typically knows what to expect from his/her students, sees their reactions, and can assist them on the spot with any support they may need. In an online course, much of that has to be planned out ahead of time and the lack of face-to-face interaction must be accounted for as well. This is especially true for a course geared towards students at the high school level who may not have the maturity or sense of responsibility to work through their problems or ask for help when it is needed.



## Design

### Student Recruitment

For my first course, I have decided to design an online curriculum for an English 12 class. This is a mainstream class that all students must take their senior year and one that is required for graduation. With that in mind, the next step would be to find out the number of seniors RHS will have for the 2003-2004 school year. Given the projected growth rates as well as projected drop rates, it is expected that Redlands High School will have approximately 630 seniors next year. Considering this is on a trial basis, I feel certain I would only want to offer this class to one group of thirty students.

The next step would be to determine the best type of student for an online course. The expectations have to be somewhat different for the average high school student as opposed to the average college student. I feel safe in saying that the student would need to have three personality characteristics: he/she would have to feel comfortable working with computers and working online, he/she would also need to be a self-starter, and finally, he/she would have to feel comfortable working on his/her own and confident enough to seek out help when needed. "Online learners are self-directed and/or working in their

chosen fields" (World Wide Learn, 2003, p. 2). These are the expectations of every college student, but not necessarily the expectations most high school students would admit they were ready to meet.

Given the limited time, I feel a survey of the current juniors would be the best start. First of all, by surveying current juniors, I can create a follow-up questionnaire for their current teachers and counselors. Considering the personality types that tend to be more successful in online courses, students may not be the best judge of their own character. Referencing their counselors and teachers would add additional, professional insight into the students' prospects for success. The survey would also need to assess the students' access to a computer and the internet. While the school district would surely not allow any student to be excluded from the class because he/she lacks the funds to have his/her own computer at home; having a computer or at least readily available access to a computer would be crucial to a student's success in this course.

Once the surveys were completed by both the student and her/his counselors and teachers, an informational meeting for both parents and students would be necessary. The concept of an online course would be new to many

students and parents at this stage and having them be sure of the expectations of the class, especially of any class that is required to graduate, would be a deterrent for possible problems in the future. Finally, as one last determining factor for recruitment I would want to give all prospective students a one week trial run with the online course. I would be set up in a mode exactly the same as what I would expect from a week in the actual online course. Once these steps are completed, thirty students would be chosen based on their potential for success in the class.

Requirements for the District and the State in  
Regards to Proposed Online Curriculum  
Standards

For every class taught, there is a list of requirements that need to be met in order to show that the student successfully completed the course and is deserving of the credits assigned to that course. Most people only consider the curriculum and its comprehension or mastery as the determining factors for whether or not a student deserves credit for a given course. At the district and state levels, there are other facets of education that must be considered, foremost aside from comprehension are attendance and the validity of the work completed. Almost every college and/or university has some sort of honor

code or stated rule that requires each student to complete his or her own work. She/he also understands that turning in work other than her/his own is grounds for dismissal from that institution. While there are similar expectations at the high school level, it seems a given that most students do not take this rule quite as seriously as it is intended. How would an online course be able to make sure that the student's work was in fact her/his own? How would an online course be able to prove that a given student had worked a number of hours equivalent to those required by the district and the state?

In regards to a student completing his/her own work, there is no guarantee that will be 100 percent infallible in making sure all work completed is the student's original work. There are a couple of options that will make it difficult to do otherwise. Many schools that already offer online courses require a parent log of the student's work hours be kept and turned in on a weekly basis. There are also a number of online programs that can be used for an online course actually track the time and sites accessed by the students while they are working. Additionally, some schools require that a certain portion of the tests be taken in class. Finally, it would also be

possible to implement a more specific honor code, one designated as conforming not only to the school's individual requirements, but to the requirements for the class itself. Since this is the first time a course such as this would be implemented in the Redlands school district as well as at RHS, I would want a combination of all four so that there would be a complete list of checks and balances for the course that would easily meet with approval at any level.

#### Curriculum Design

Most of the seniors who would want to sign up for an online course will probably be attracted to the idea of being out of school and also be attracted to the use of technology. In order for this to be a class that they enjoyed enough to want to do the work on their own, the class would have to be designed in such a way as to intrigue them and keep them enthusiastic about the subject and the work required. These would not be college students who voluntarily paid for and want to be in the class. They would students who want to work at their own pace and at the time they choose to complete the work. They would have the added pressure of needing to pass the class in order to graduate. Finally, they will be working in a different environment, one in which they would not have an

instructor meeting with them daily, reminding them about assignments, due dates, etc.

In order to meet these unique needs, every aspect of the course would have to be specifically outlined so as to leave no room for doubt. All deadlines would have to be set for a specific time. Students would need reasonable access to the teacher for help. More than anything else, the curriculum will need to be presented differently than what the students are used to. Because they are lacking the benefit of the natural interaction and entertainment of the classroom setting, I will need to provide them with a virtual substitute. Online chats, web quests, videoconferencing, are just some of the instruction possibilities that would be necessary to maintain their interest. Finally, it has to be considered that just as it is with college students, the curriculum cannot be doled out on a daily basis. These students would be expecting to work at their own pace. Requiring them to log in every day for an assignment would defeat the purpose of an online course.

## Development

### General Page Presentation and Organization

Undoubtedly it will be my goal to recruit students with a certain amount of computer/online literacy that would enable them to easily navigate my site as well as the Internet as a whole. In order to do that, I would want to make my site as easy as possible to use for every possible need the students may have. It needs to be visually appealing as well as functional.

To begin with, the basic layout of my pages is made up of a dark blue background with white lettering. This is based on the RHS colors. While there will be graphics that appeal to the students' lifestyle as well as the curriculum, animation and the usual "bells and whistles" will be kept to a minimum to aid in uploading speed. This seems to be a principle many online educators agree with. "I have kept the design of the courses simple - no frames, few graphics, no streaming video" (Colaric, 2002, p. 3). The navigation of the site may be repetitive, but this is done to foster easy of use. The main pages: "Home," "Syllabus," "Calendar/Assignments," "FAQ's," "Links," "Comments," "Blackboard," and "Grades" will appear in the left-hand bar of every page. Additionally, if there is a

unit of work mentioned on a page and it has its own page, the actual word would be a link to the given page.

### Work Tracking

In order to meet the district and state needs for proof of attendance and work completed, the site will offer a couple of features. First of all, almost all work will be completed using Blackboard through the district. A link to Blackboard will appear on the "Calendar/Assignments" page as well as on the "Home" page and each individual assignment page. Anywhere the word Blackboard appears in the site, it will be a link to the official Blackboard site. Additionally, there will be "Hours Worked" worksheet attached to the "Calendar/Assignments" page that the students will fill out, have their parents sign as witnesses, and turn in weekly at the physical campus. Finally, there will be a link on the "Home" page, and "Calendar/Assignments" page, and the "Links" page that leads them to Thinkwave so that the students and parents can check/verify grades.

### Assignment Resources

Because this is likely going to be each student's first exposure to an online course, it is going to be necessary to explain each assignment in as much detail as possible trying to think of any and all questions that may



arise when a student is trying to complete the assignment. With that in mind, the "Calendar/Assignments" page will include a link to a page for each assignment. Those pages will include a general description of the assignment, Internet links to additional resources, grading rubrics, deadlines, and examples. Throughout the web site, each and every time the assignment is mentioned, there will be a link to that assignment description and each assignment will be given its own color that be shown in the title for that assignment hopefully making it easily recognizable.

#### Implementation

Prior to school letting out for the summer, possible volunteers were requested from my current classes of juniors. They were told about the basics of my project and what would be required of them. Seventeen students offered to volunteer if available. An Informed Consent letter outlining the project itself as well as the trial run was approved by the Institutional Review Board at California State University San Bernardino as well as by the principal at Redlands High School, Mr. George Anderson. Along with the Informed Consent, the parents received a sample of the directions and questions students would be working on during the trial run of the web site.

A trial run took place on July 31, 2003 at the RHS campus. At RHS the trial run took place in room 423, a classroom set up in conjunction with the Virtual High Tech High program and one outfitted with forty student computer stations. Five students, who will be seniors in the 2003-2004 school year, came to campus to look at the site, try to navigate it as sort of a scavenger hunt through the site, and give me their evaluations. I do not expect the district to be ready for this course until the 2004-2005 school year at the earliest, but this project along with the student trial run will definitely enable me to see what needs to be done to make such a course a success.

#### Evaluation

Originally I had spoken to six student volunteers about assisting with the trial run, but at the last moment one of the students was unable to be present. The trial commenced with the five remaining students, three boys (hereafter known as students A, B, & C) and two girls (students D & E). These five students were spaced one station apart from each other so as to foster individual work. The students were given an assignment sheet in which they had to answer on their own five questions based on the information provided in the web site. The questions

were written in such a way as to mimic the type of searching a student might have to do on his/her own in order to complete an assignment for an online course such as verifying due dates and assignment requirements. For each of the five questions they were to begin at the homepage and monitor exactly how they found the information, what the correct answer was, and comment on any difficulty they had or suggestions they could make. All of this work was to be done on their own with no outside assistance from myself or each other. Because the trial run went fairly well, it lasted less than an hour with about twenty-five minutes given to the individual assignments and another twenty-five minutes given for the group discussion.

As it turned out, the trial run went fairly well. There were two links, one to the Blackboard web site and one to the page for the play *Oedipus Rex*, that were not available on the homepage. Other than that, the students were able to navigate the site easily and find all of the needed information to complete the assignment in two clicks or less from the home page. My goal was to be able to have students be able to do it in less than five clicks. Only one student, student E, was unable to complete all of the assignments that could be completed.

Her comment included on the assignment sheet was that, "Over all the pages were great, some of the things are hard to find." Aside from her comment, everyone else felt the site was very user friendly.

Following the assignments I asked the students to complete an open discussion survey with four questions. Question one asked about the general appearance of the page and the color-coding. This was the highlight of the site for most of the students. Student C commented, "The appearance is fine, the color coding helps you find what you're looking for." In response to the second question regarding the language used in the site and being able to follow the directions on their own, the comments were again very positive. According to student B, "From what I read, everything was easily comprehensible. I think even novice users could handle this site." The next question asked about the links, but the problems with that were apparent to me before the students even tried the site. I was worried that having links of any important units or words in the site might be too repetitive, but the students seemed to like it. Student B said, "I like all of the links there were. There were enough to get around, but not too many to get confusing." Finally, I asked the students whether or not they felt they could complete an online

course after having sampled one. Student E, who seemed to have the most difficulty with the site said, "It is very clear and easy to understand. I think I would be able to 97% successfully complete the course."

### Summary

Overall the trial run went well. I worry though that the students were not being as objective as they could be because they are familiar with me. With the positive comments I know what I was did well and can enhance that further without worry. Where the one student had difficulties, I will have to assess how much of that was from my error in designing the site and how much was her novice level of computer literacy; though my goal is to have a site that is navigable by anyone.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Introduction

Included in Chapter Four is a presentation of the conclusions gleamed as a result of completing the project. Further, the recommendations extracted from the project are presented. Lastly, the Chapter concludes with a summary.

#### Conclusions

The conclusions extracted from the project follows.

1. The facilitator style of teaching is more conducive to powerful learning than the more common formal authority style. At the same time, this may not be particularly true in distance education which seems to require a melding of the two. As mentioned in the paper from Indiana State University, the facilitator approach may seem more user-friendly for the teacher and student alike, but the formal authority style translates better into an online environment where a set structure and set goals better profess the requirements of the class. Putting the two together, offering the curriculum style

of the facilitator approach with the structured goals of the formal authority style should provide students with an online learning environment that interests and challenges students while at the same time leaving them feeling comfortable with the parameters of distance education.

2. It is likely going to be difficult to continually find students who fit a particular style of learning that is suited to online education. This is mostly true because as the research suggests, most learners have multiple intelligences and multiple learning styles. Rather than try and only pick students of a certain learning style; it would seem the responsibility of the instructor to try and accommodate as many different learning styles as possible. He/she might also end up strengthening different learning styles in which students formerly considered themselves to be weak.

## Recommendations

The recommendations resulting from the project follows.

1. Design the web site in a more facilitator style while keeping a rigid structure that mimics the formal authority approach.
2. Encourage students unfamiliar with the instructor to complete any future trial runs.
3. Rather than look for a particular type of student, survey the students and cater the class to their learning styles. This includes the overall curriculum, the evaluation, and the site design.
4. It would be recommended that further research into the facilitator style of teaching be done in order to see what types of assignments or curriculum from this style translate easily into the formal authority approach for structure.
5. If an instructor were interested in starting an online course it would also be pertinent to research trends in local, state, and federal funding of technologically based programs.
6. Research of existing high school programs within the state as well as successful programs from



around the country could aid in the initial start up of an online course at the high school level.

APPENDIX A  
CD OF PROJECT

APPENDIX B  
INFORMED CONSENT

## Informed Consent

It is expected that within the next five years, college campuses around the country will have in the range of 30% of their courses available online. This is a quickly changing trend in education and one that is likely to continue to grow rather than slow down. Additionally, budget constraints at the state level have made it increasingly difficult for public schools to offer enough physical space to educate all of their students. With these two considerations in mind, I have proposed an online English 12 course as my Master's Thesis Project at California State University, San Bernardino. I am asking for your student's assistance and your approval to test out one unit of an online curriculum. This research has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board, California State University-San Bernardino. This study is being conducted by Joshua Murguia, a Master's Student at California State University, San Bernardino under the supervision of Prof. Eun-Ok Baek, Department of Science, Math, and Technology.

Prior to school letting out this year I asked for students to sign up as possible volunteers to assess my English 12 web site. Your student has been chosen because of her/his work ethic, GPA, maturity, interest in online courses, and in some cases, interest in a smaller senior year workload or mid-term graduation. With your permission I am inviting your student to complete a trial run of my web site and I am going to ask the following of each student:

- 1) The trial run will take place from 2:00 P. M. to 3:30 P. M. on Thursday, July 31<sup>st</sup> in room 423 on the north campus of RHS.
- 2) During this two hour period he/she will be asked to complete the following:
  - Navigate the web site and making any comments, positive or negative, about its general appearance and usability
  - Complete a brief list of "assignments" in which he/she must navigate the site to find the information needed and then comment on how difficult/easy it was to complete
  - Participate in an open forum with the other five students and discuss the degree to which a site such as this might help them successfully complete an online course and what additional information may be needed
- 3) To properly test the site, each student will have a different set of "assignments" to complete and he/she will receive no direct instruction

on how to do so. Because this is a test of the usability of the site, they will be completing the work as though a face-to-face teacher was not available.

Again, completing this trial run is done on a volunteer basis. This will not affect any of your student's grades in a positive or negative way. Your student is free to withdraw from the trial run at any time. A sample copy of the navigation assignments and forum survey are attached.

I appreciate your consideration in this manner. Please have your student sign below attesting to her/his understanding of the expectations of the project. If you consent to your student participating in this project, please sign your name below as well. Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Joshua Murguia, English Teacher

Student Name (Print) \_\_\_\_\_

Student Name (Signature) \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Parent Name (Print) \_\_\_\_\_

Parent Name (Signature) \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

If you have any additional questions or concerns please feel free to contact me at RHS on Wednesdays in July, at 307-5500, ext. 423. You may also contact the principal, George Anderson at 307-5500.

APPENDIX C  
NAVIGATION ASSIGNMENTS

## Navigation Assignments

In order to test the usability of this English 12 web site I need to not only see if you can complete the assignments below by using the web site, but **how** you complete the assignments. I am sure most of you are used to quickly navigating web sites without really noticing how you are doing it; but I need you to slow that process down and note in detail how you get from point A to point B.

Directions:

- For each assignment list in order the pages or icons you clicked on until you found the needed information. It may take you up to 5 clicks to find the correct information, but if it takes more than five clicks, simply indicate that on the fifth line.
- Answer the question for each assignment.
- Please make any comments about how difficult or easy it was to complete the assignment and any suggestions you might have about information that was left out, but that you feel might be necessary, but that was not included.

**Assignment 1:** On what day is the U. C. reflective essay rough draft due?

Click 1: \_\_\_\_\_

Click 2: \_\_\_\_\_

Click 3: \_\_\_\_\_

Click 4: \_\_\_\_\_

Click 5: \_\_\_\_\_

Correct Answer: \_\_\_\_\_

Additional Comments/Suggestions: \_\_\_\_\_

**Assignment 2:** At what time of day must each assignment be turned in to the Digital Drop Box?

Click 1: \_\_\_\_\_

Click 2: \_\_\_\_\_

Click 3: \_\_\_\_\_

Click 4: \_\_\_\_\_

Click 5: \_\_\_\_\_

Correct Answer: \_\_\_\_\_

Additional Comments/Suggestions: \_\_\_\_\_

**Assignment 3:** During what weeks will you be working on *Oedipus*?

Click 1: \_\_\_\_\_

Click 2: \_\_\_\_\_

Click 3: \_\_\_\_\_

Click 4: \_\_\_\_\_

Click 5: \_\_\_\_\_

Correct Answer: \_\_\_\_\_

Additional Comments/Suggestions:

**Assignment 4:** When will the *Siddhartha* book report final take place?

Click 1: \_\_\_\_\_

Click 2: \_\_\_\_\_

Click 3: \_\_\_\_\_

Click 4: \_\_\_\_\_

Click 5: \_\_\_\_\_

Correct Answer: \_\_\_\_\_

Additional Comments/Suggestions:

**Assignment 5:** What is the weekly journal question for the week of 9/8?

Click 1: \_\_\_\_\_

Click 2: \_\_\_\_\_

Click 3: \_\_\_\_\_

Click 4: \_\_\_\_\_

Click 5: \_\_\_\_\_

Correct Answer: \_\_\_\_\_

Additional Comments/Suggestions:



APPENDIX D  
OPEN DISCUSSION SURVEY

## Open Discussion Survey

Now that you have navigated the web site and completed a few assignments, please take a few minutes to answer the questions below and make any comments or suggestions you feel might help me as a teacher or possible future students. Please feel free to be open and honest with your responses. Once everyone has completed this written survey, we will discuss it as a group and look at the site as a group to fully understand your comments.

- 1) General Appearance: What did you think of the colors and the lettering in the site? Were they visually appealing? Were they easy to read?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 2) Language: Were all directions and information in the web site easily comprehensible? Was there anything about the wording that might be confusing for novice internet users?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 3) Links: Did all links work? Were there any links that seemed unnecessary? Were there any links that should have been included but were left out?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 4) Are the syllabus and assignments clear and easy to understand? Do you think that by following only the information in the web site you would be able to successfully complete the course?

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A PROCESS EVALUATION OF THE RIVERSIDE COUNTY  
DEPENDENCY RECOVERY DRUG COURT

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A Project  
Presented to the  
Faculty of  
California State University,  
San Bernardino

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Social Work

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by  
Philip Marshall Breitenbucher  
Sean Collins Sullivan  
June 2003

A PROCESS EVALUATION OF THE RIVERSIDE COUNTY  
DEPENDENCY RECOVERY DRUG COURT

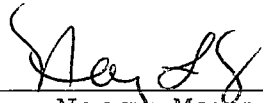
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A Project  
Presented to the  
Faculty of  
California State University,  
San Bernardino

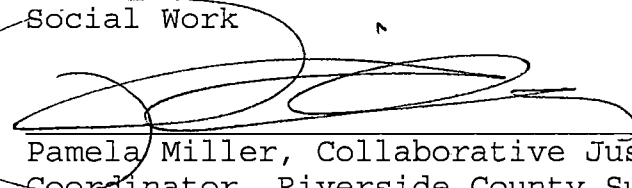
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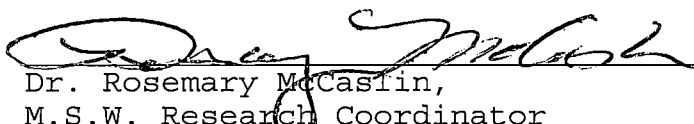
by  
Philip Marshall Breitenbucher  
Sean Collins Sullivan  
June 2003

Approved by:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Dr. Nancy Mary, Faculty Supervisor,  
Social Work

6-3-03  
Date

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Pamela Miller, Collaborative Justice  
Coordinator, Riverside County Superior  
Court

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Dr. Rosemary McCaslin,  
M.S.W. Research Coordinator

## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this article is to describe results of a process evaluation of the Riverside County Dependency Recovery Drug Court Program. In all, 17 different individuals representing 12 different agency perspectives provided information about the drug court program for this study. Results indicated that although the program was relatively new, drug court team members believed that the program adapted the two "key components " of drug court successfully into their program. The feedback from each of the agencies surveyed was overwhelmingly positive.

The process evaluation approach provided in-depth information from a variety of perspectives on two dimensions of the program.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The researchers would like to acknowledge those who have contributed to the success of this project. We would like to thank the Riverside County, Dependency Recovery Drug Court committee for the opportunity to conduct this research. Specifically, we would like to thank Pamela Miller, Collaborative Justice Coordinator.

We would also like to acknowledge Pat O'Boyle-Hauer our field supervisor for her support and guidance throughout this project.

Our faculty supervisor, Dr. Nancy Mary, has provided us with invaluable leadership and direction.

Finally, we would like to acknowledge our family for their support throughout the length of the MSW program.

Thanks to all of you.

## DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to my fiancée, Desiree Medina. Your love and support has inspired and motivated me to continue to strive for excellence.

I love you with all my heart.

Phil Breitenbucher

This project is dedicated to my two sons, Collin and Ethan Sullivan. Your youthful energy and love has been my strength and inspiration to challenge myself to be a positive role model and father to you both.

I love you both very much.

Sean C. Sullivan



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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

The introduction will begin with a problem statement that introduces the population of focus of this research, the policy and the practice contexts that influence how the needs of this population are addressed, and a description of the proposed study. The second part of the introduction will describe the purpose of the study and its significance for the social work profession.

#### Problem Statement

Child welfare caseworkers are often involved with parents with substance use disorders (U.S. General Accounting Office [GAO], 1997). In the United States it has been estimated that 15% of women of childbearing age currently abuse substances (National Institute Of Drug Abuse, 1995), and approximately 11% of children (8.3 million) are under the care of at least one drug- or alcohol-abusing parent (Karoll & Poertner, 2002). Evidence from various national studies suggests 40% to 80% of all confirmed neglect and maltreatment cases involve substance abuse (Karoll & Poertner, 2002).

Substance abusing parents usually experience multiple problems that few child welfare agencies and substance

abuse treatment programs are prepared to address. With the enactment of the federal Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997 (ASFA) states are required to file a petition to terminate parental rights if a child has been in out-of-home care for at least 15 of the most recent 22 months. With the enactment of ASFA, the needs of substance abusing parents have moved to the foreground. Child welfare and substance abuse treatment programs must collaborate to provide children with safe, stable homes with nurturing families as a foundation for healthy and productive life.

ASFA created a renewed emphasis on immediate planning for children requiring child welfare services (CWS) to find more effective ways to achieve family stability. ASFA emphasizes timely decision making by requiring permanency decisions for abused and neglected children within a 12-month timeline and includes mandates to terminate parental rights once a child has been placed in out-of-home care for 15 of the previous 22 months unless compelling reasons exist not to initiate termination.

Riverside County receives approximately 18,538 reports of suspected child abuse or neglect each year. In 2001, there were 6,742 dependency cases in Riverside County, of which approximately 4,140 children received

out-of-home placements. It is estimated that in Riverside County, California, 70-80% of children currently entering the foster care system do so because of abuse or neglect associated with familial substance abuse.

Attention to related problems of substance abuse and child maltreatment within families is a core element of the service delivery required on the part of CWS agencies. These mandates place a burden on CWS to ensure prompt and adequate services for parents, with an emphasis on making reasonable efforts to obtain access to resources and coordination of community services (McAlpine, Marshall, & Harper, 2001).

Collaboration between CWS agencies and substance abuse treatment providers is an essential link if families are to be given real opportunities for recovery and children are to have a chance to grow up in safe family situations. In many communities, when children are removed from parental custody, the response is to offer parents a list of local treatment agencies with instructions to seek treatment and abstain from drug use. If the parent happens to be successful, with or without help from the child welfare agency, reunification is possible. If not, the agency may move toward termination of parental rights. Using concurrent planning strategies, CWS may place a

child in a foster family home with adoption potential. This approach may secure a permanent home for the child, but the family is likely to have received little or no treatment. Thus, the underlying issues that plagued the family initially are still in existence and have never been addressed. This further increases the probability of recidivism amongst these families with every new child born testing positive to drugs.

#### The Drug Court Model

As of August 1999, 396 different jurisdictions in the United States had implemented a drug court program (Drug Court Clearinghouse and Technical Assistance Project [DCCTAP], 1998). Drug courts are treatment oriented and target clients whose major problems stem from substance abuse. Although there are some standards that are required for each drug program, each drug court program is unique in how its program meets the overall standards and delivers the treatment service to clients (Logan, Williams, Leukefeld, & Milton, 2000).

The Riverside County Dependency Recovery Drug Court seeks to integrate the "Key Components" identified by the Department of Justice (1998). The design of drug court consists of structural accountability, judicial control,

individual accountability, and graduated sanctions (Tauber, 1994). This structure decreases the amount of needed resources from the social, health, and legal systems. Delivery of services is integrated into a phase system that has benchmark performance levels before advancement can occur into the next level. The goals of drug court are to provide intensive treatment for substance abuse and increase individual accountability for self-sufficiency (O'Boyle-Hauer, 1999).

Structural accountability is one example of the uniqueness of this model. Structural accountability is defined as the close collaboration between members of the drug court team. This collaboration includes those professionals from social services, substance abuse treatment, juvenile defense panel, mental health, and public health. The focus of these members is on treatment issues after assessment and identification of treatment needs of each client.

#### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the implementation of the "Key Components" into the Riverside County Dependency Recovery Drug Court program. This research will employ a self-administered questionnaire



survey design as a method of data collection. Drug court administrative personnel will be surveyed to conduct this process evaluation. To better understand how and why a program such as drug court is effective, an analysis of how the program was conceptualized and implemented will be conducted. A process evaluation, in contrast to an examination of program outcome only, can provide a clearer and more comprehensive picture of how drug court impacts those involved in the drug court process e.g., judges, staff, clients, defense attorneys, and treatment providers.

Specifically, a process evaluation provides information about program aspects that lead to desirable or undesirable outcomes (Logan et al., 2000). Because changes in the original program design may affect program outcomes, a process evaluation can be an important tool in helping judges, treatment providers, staff, clients, and defense council to better understand and improve the drug court process. In addition, a process evaluation may help reveal strategies that are most effective for achieving desirable outcomes and may expose those areas that are less effective. Finally, a process evaluation may facilitate the replication of a drug court program in other locations.

## Significance of the Project for Social Work

This research will impact social work on various levels. For the social work profession, this research offers empirical data reflecting the impact of substance abuse on the child welfare system. It is hoped that this research will have a direct and positive impact on the services offered to parents struggling with addiction. Any opportunity for an individual to access substance abuse treatment is an opportunity to affect individual as well as societal change. Social workers can use the information contained in this research to aid them in making decisions regarding the individual's treatment plan.

In terms of social work practice on an agency level, this project will provide useful information to the Riverside County Dependency Recovery Drug Court (DRDC) in terms of meeting the needs of future and current clients. This study may also have a favorable impact on fundraising efforts by demonstrating that the DRDC holds itself accountable to its clients by looking at itself critically. This is important in competing for the limited funding available in our changing social welfare system.

In terms of social work research, this project will contribute to the relatively small body of literature on

the effectiveness of applying the criminal drug court model to family drug court. In evaluating the effectiveness of drug court, researchers have often relied on only the program outcomes such as termination, graduation, and recidivism rates. In contrast, a process evaluation can provide a clearer and more comprehensive picture of how drug court impacts those involved in the drug court process.

The proposed process evaluation will provide an excellent foundation for this program to enhance their service delivery methods and to take the next steps in following through with their outcomes evaluation. This research seeks to answer the following questions: 1) Is the DRDC conducting interdisciplinary education that promotes effective drug court planning? 2) Is the DRDC integrating alcohol and other drug treatment services with dependency case processing?

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### Introduction

Chapter Two consists of a discussion of the relevant literature. Specifically, this chapter is dedicated to sampling and reviewing some of the latest theoretical and empirical research on drug courts and their programs. This chapter also reviews the theoretical conception of the drug court model and a detailed description of the Riverside County Dependency Recovery Drug Court.

#### Historical Framework

In the 1930s the Federal Prison Narcotic Farm System was developed to meet the rising need of the correctional system to house those convicted of drug related offenses. At this time, most state and local facilities were overloaded due to the increase in drug related arrests and convictions (Musto, 1973). Throughout the 1940's, the incarceration of drug addicts was the primary method of case disposition.

Public health personnel were involved in running these farms and noticed a high recidivism rate for discharged prisoners. Additionally, they noted a deeper penetration of addicts into the criminal justice system to

maintain their habits (Musto, 1973). The farms eventually evolved into facilities that promoted research projects from the public health, social services, and medical professions. These institutions also provided training internships for the newly established National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH). The experience of NIMH personnel working on the farms combined with public health, social service, and medical professions, would be the nucleus of a staunch advocacy campaign for treatment starting in the 1950,s (Musto, 1973). The criminal justice system, however, still influenced the greatest number of case dispositions.

The sophistication of the transportation and delivery system of drugs following World War II pressured legislatures to pass drug control laws that changed the penalties for an individual who was convicted of a narcotic offense. The 1956 Narcotic Control Act was the pinnacle of legislative controls. It prohibited the suspension of guilty sentences and in some cases supported the enforcement of the death penalty (Musto, 1973).

#### The Medical Model

During the Kennedy and Johnson administrations the National Institute of Mental Health presented empirical

research that concluded that drug use is a physiological and psychological disease and should be treated within a medical model. This paradigm shift, as well as legal rulings and legislation in the 1960s, placed the emphasis on prevention and treatment rather than solely interdiction and incarceration (Goldstein, 1994).

In 1962, the Supreme Court ruled that addiction was a disease and not a crime (Musto, 1973). The Supreme Court also stated that "civil commitment" in a medical hospital may be more appropriate than in a correctional facility (Glaser, 1974). Additionally, ancillary services provided through a medical setting were incorporated as part of an aftercare plan. Acknowledging that aftercare was an important part of any recovery plan furthered the philosophical view that addiction is a disease rather than a moral deficiency (Lewis, 1994).

The deinstitutionalization movement within the mental health community initiated the outpatient model of service delivery. The primary concept of this model was to provide the least restrictive setting for treatment. The community care center, part of the building block of the Great Society social program of the 1960's, provided treatment services and customized prevention campaigns at a local level. The criminal justice system responded by shifting

resources of interdiction away from the individual user and focused on the supplier and trafficker of narcotics (Sessions, 1991).

### The Emergence of Drug Court

The Anti-Drug Abuse Acts of 1986 and 1988 funded primarily enforcement measures due to the devastation of crack cocaine use during this period. The increased drug arrests overwhelmed correctional institutions, courts, and law enforcement. By 1991, 50% of inmates had used drugs in the month before their arrest (ONDCP, 1995). They were also serving longer sentences. For example, the average sentence in a state facility for drug possession was 4 years and 1 month. Sixty-eight percent of property offenders who are substance abusing were rearrested within 3 years of their releases (Department of Justice, 1998). The revolving door analogy was used to describe the lack of existing intervention on drug use and criminal activity. Criminal justice personnel as well as treatment providers agreed that the traditional approaches of case processing in many instances were not effective in reducing the drug involvement of persons in the criminal courts (DOJ, 1993).

There was a clear need for diversionary programs for those individuals with a substance abuse problem who committed nonviolent crimes. The drug court model was first proposed in Dade County Florida in 1989 (National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse, 1998). Although similar programs were operating in metropolitan areas such as New York City and Chicago, the Florida model was different. The philosophical engine behind the Florida model of drug court was the recognition that "drug use is not just a criminal justice issue, but a public health problem with deep roots in society" (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Agency, 1996). This model utilized structural accountability, judicial control, and individual accountability. The structural accountability within drug court was used to form alliances between community-based treatment providers and the criminal justice system. The judicial control uses the coercive power of incarceration to focus on the individual's behavior and progress in a treatment setting. Individual accountability is visible in reduced recidivism activity as well as follow up on ancillary services such as health and dental and other self-care activities.

Drug court utilizes a collaborative approach to enlist all the professional disciplines involved in



treatment issues. The collaborative theory of helping uses a case management model to deliver services. Treatment services include graduated sanctions that are used when the client does not comply with the program requirements. Research indicates that it is the "certainty of the sanction rather than the severity of the consequence" that has great impact (Harrell, Cook, & Carer, 1998, p. 10).

The target population of the drug court program varies. Although some violent offenders are accepted into some programs, the most frequent participants are those individuals who commit nonviolent offenses and have a substance abuse problem (GAO, 1997). The drug court program has a screening and assessment process. Screening determines eligibility and appropriateness for drug court. Assessment determines what services are needed to support the participant's attempt at a successful completion of the drug court program (Peter & Peyton, 1998).

#### Evaluation on the Effectiveness of the Drug Court Program

In the United States, drug courts had been established in 361 jurisdictions and 220 others were in various stages of planning by the summer of 1999 (Drug Court Clearinghouse and Technical Assistance Program, 1998). According to Miethe, Lu and Reese (2000, p. 523),

"Concerns about greater court efficiency and the need for aggressive treatment of substance abusers have been the primary impetus for the emergence of drug courts across the country." With the proliferation of drug courts, numerous theoretical frameworks, and descriptive and empirical studies were published concerning the various policies and programs that these institutions adopted (e.g., Belenko, 1998; Belenko, 1999; Deschenes & Greenwood, 1995; Goldkamp, 1994; Goldkamp & White & Robinson 1993; Miethe, Lu, & Reese, 2000; Peters & Murrin, 2000; Sherin & Mahoney, 1996; Tauber, 1994; Terry, 1999).

Current research of drug courts is limited to evaluation and outcome reports, virtually no longitudinal data exists (National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse, 1998). The federal government, in recognition of the need for evaluation and measurement, has required an evaluation component for any agency that is receiving federal grant monies. Other governmental oversight includes the Drug Court Clearinghouse and Technical Assistance Project (Cooper, 1997) at American University, which is sponsored by the Drug Court Program Office, a subsidiary of the Department of Justice.

The Drug Court Clearinghouse and Technical Assistance project (DCCTAP) was listed as a contributor in providing

common terms for the evaluation report prepared by the GAO. The DCCTAP conducted a study as part of a legislative requirement of the 1994 Violent Crime Act. The information in the report was qualified by the limited parameters of the data available. The survey instrument was independent of others used by DCCTAP, and the questionnaire design had open-ended as well as closed-item questions. The overall findings were in aggregate form. Each jurisdiction's methodology and procedures were described to supplement the interpretations results of the overall study.

The evaluation was conducted using 16 drug court programs that have been in operation from 1989 through 1996 (GAO, 1997). The evaluators acknowledge the inability to draw firm conclusions from this study because of methodology variation of each drug court program.

Conclusion on drug courts' retention and effectiveness was in agreement with other previously conducted preliminary studies. For example, drug courts were found to have a positive impact. There are a significant number of jurisdictional studies that show cost savings as well as participant completion rates in the program itself. The retention rate of programs that continue to use the drug court model was significantly higher than program retention rates for probation-based

programs. The range of retention rates was described as less than 1% to over 70% with an average of 43% (GAO, 1997).

Other societal benefits were noted, such as drug-free babies, decreased dependency on the foster care system, completion of a high school education, and development of employment skills (GAO, 1997). Relapse was recorded less frequently for those participating in drug court. Recidivism measures also varied greatly in data collection techniques. Two programs cited in the GAO Study cited a recidivism rate of 20% and 10%, and reported treatment costs from \$3,215-\$5,834, as opposed to \$8,400, to incarcerate the same individual for a six-month jail sentence (GAO, 1997)

Goldkamp, White, and Robinson (1993) evaluated the methodology of studying both the impact and the process of drug courts. They offered an analytical framework to answer the core question of "do drug courts work?" To answer this question they applied a drug court typology developed previously. This typology meant to identify the basic structural dimensions present in different drug court programs in order to develop a general body of knowledge about the functioning of drug courts. The authors argue that the question whether drug courts work

should be treated in two parts: 1) compared with no drug court handling of certain drug abuse cases, do drug courts produce better results and 2) if the comparison shows that drug courts seem to work, how do they operate?

Essentially, this article focuses on issues concerning outcome and process evaluations of drug court programs. In analyzing the findings of the empirical illustration of this typology involving two different drug courts, the authors found some support that these programs can contribute to crime reduction and the variations in outcomes may be explained by factors related to the operation of the drug courts.

Longshore et al. (2000) showed concern of difficulty drawing clear conclusions regarding the variability of the treatment outcomes in relation to the program characteristics. In order to rectify this situation, the authors proposed five drug court dimensions that might be proven useful in this endeavor. They suggested the following dimensions: leverage, population severity, program intensity, predictability and rehabilitation emphasis as a new approach to describe drug court structure and process. According to Longshore et al. (2000) the main advantage of using these dimensions was that each one of them can be scored on a range of low to

high. In addition they lend themselves to propose a set of systematic hypotheses regarding the effects of the structure and the program process on the drug court outcomes.

Burdon, Roll, Prendergast, and Rawson (2000) found after a literature review of the growth, operations, and evaluations of drug courts that most of the program "models" emphasize punishment such as graduated sanctions. They also found that these programs make little use of treatment strategies aimed at reinforcements that would promote behavior change and abstinence from substance abuse. The authors presented "contingency techniques that involve systematic application of reinforcement contingent upon the performance of specified behaviors." According to Burdon et al. the evaluation of these techniques is currently under way in a study of a substance abuse treatment program that defendants from a drug court are referred to. This study may shed some light on the general issue of how to implement successful treatment modalities of substance abuse in a criminal justice setting.

One of the problems that many drug court programs faced was their high failure rates. To avoid this occurrence, which could endanger the future of drug courts, there was a major concern to develop better

screening methods for participants who may successfully complete and benefit from these programs. This issue was a recurring one in many treatment and correctional programs and often leads to controversies. There was always the lingering question of whether better methods of screening of prospective participants will lead to "creaming," i.e., that only the low risk cases will be admitted into the program.

Saum and Scarpitti (2000) dealt with a developing phenomenon concerning drug courts. Namely, many of them move from their initial function of providing diversion programs for first-time drug offenders to dealing with more complex clients. Increasing numbers of these new types of participants have criminal records, including violent crimes. As noted, originally, drug court programs were designed to deal with non-violent substance abusers and most of them were clearly treatment oriented. The inclusion of offenders with more extensive criminal histories in these programs presents drug court decision-makers with a difficult situation in which they have to seek a balance between the need for treatment and the implementation of corrections. This undertaking involves the selection of prospective participants whose criminal records would suggest that their inclusion in the

program would not pose a risk to the public. So far there is little known about whether drug courts are suitable for handling offenders having violent criminal records.

### The Effectiveness of Drug Courts: Recidivism

The following two articles focus on the effectiveness of drug court programs in terms of reduction of recidivism. They study the extent of recidivism of drug participants and the recidivism of comparable felony drug offenders who were adjudicated in the traditional manner and/or were placed on probation. These articles investigate the central question: Do drug courts produce better results compared to no drug court?

Spohn et al. (2001) conducted an evaluation of the effectiveness of the Douglas County (Omaha), Nebraska drug court program in terms of the reduction of recidivism of its participants. Using a methodologically sophisticated research design the authors compared offenders who participated in the drug court program with two matched comparison groups on a number of measures of recidivism. Their findings showed favorable results for the drug court participants.

In an article concerning drug court effectiveness Brewster 2001 reports the results of the evaluation of the



drug court program in Chester County, Pennsylvania. In this empirical study program participants were compared with offenders who were placed on probation, but answered the eligibility criteria of the program (i.e., were charged with non-mandatory drug offenses; were not under probation or parole supervision at the time when charged; and had no prior record of violent offenses). Drug court participants and the comparison group members were compared in terms of their current status, new arrests, revocation or removal from the program, and the results of drug testing. The evaluation showed some drug court effectiveness in drug tests and re-arrest rates during the program. However, the survival rate in the program was substantially lower in the drug court program than in traditional probation. Furthermore, there were racial differences between those who completed and those who were removed from the program. The follow-up of the small group of drug court graduates also showed some positive results.

#### Barriers to Successful Drug Court Completion

Wolf and Colyer (1996) reviewed the everyday problems of participants in complying with the formal requirements of the program. The article focused on the problems mentioned in court and were classified as individual,

immediate social milieu, and larger social structure problems. The qualitative analysis presented in their study suggests that many substance users face various problems that might impede their successful participation in drug court programs and their subsequent recovery from drug addiction. The authors identified several recovery types and problem profiles. The findings might have practical applications for drug court judges, program managers and staff members by identifying different types of offenders and the various problems they face in participating in drug court programs.

Cresswell and Deschenes (2001) examined participants' perceptions of the Orange County, California drug court program. At the outset the authors suggest that for a drug court to be considered effective, alternative to traditional punishment such as probation and incarceration, offenders and policy makers must view them similarly. Following this premise the article examined the variations in the perceptions of severity and effectiveness between minority and non-minority participants. The study suggested certain differences based on the minority status of participants. While the two groups perceived the severities of various sentences

differently, the perceived effectiveness of the program indicated only few differences.

### Applying the Drug Court Concept in Family Court Environments

The drug court program is grounded in the "key components" described in the Department of Justice (1998) publication *Defining Drug Courts: The Key Components*. These components are: 1) Drug courts integrate alcohol and other drug treatment services with justice system processing, 2) Using a nonadversarial approach, prosecution and defense counsel promote public safety while protecting participants' due process rights, 3) Eligible participants are identified early and promptly placed in the drug court program, 4) Drug courts provide access to a continuum of alcohol, drug, and other related treatment and rehabilitation services, 5) Abstinence is monitored by frequent and other drug testing, 6) A coordinated strategy governs drug court responses to participants' compliance, 7) Ongoing judicial interaction with each drug court participant is essential, 8) Monitoring and evaluation measure the achievement of program goals and gauge effectiveness, 9) Continuing interdisciplinary education promotes effective drug court planning, implementation, and operations, 10) Forging

partnerships among drug courts, public agencies, and community-based organizations generates local support and enhances drug court program effectiveness. The family drug court model has adopted these "key components" in order to ensure appropriate service delivery to the clients and to evaluate the effectiveness of the drug court program.

A family drug court differs from criminal court because it is a special docket for cases involving some loss or restriction of parental rights due to the parent's substance use. A family drug court may target matters involving custody and visitation disputes; abuse, neglect, and dependency cases, non-support; petitions to terminate parental rights; guardianship proceedings; or related matters. Family Drug courts utilize the adult drug court techniques of intensive, continuous judicial supervision of participants and coordination of treatment and rehabilitation services provided. They differ from the adult drug court model, however, in several respects. The family drug court, although similar to the adult drug court in terms of services and protocols, usually focus on the "best interests of the child," particularly if the case arises from the abuse/neglect docket and this focus is the court's paramount consideration in responding to

the progress or lack thereof of the parent (McGee, Parnham, & Smith, 2000).

In contrast to the traditional adult drug court where all cases are criminal, cases in family drug courts may originate in any division. Family drug courts have jurisdiction over juvenile, family law or domestic relations cases.

In some states, subject matter jurisdiction may be exclusive with one court division and in other states, it may be concurrent with different court divisions. Because state and county court systems vary significantly in structure, juvenile and family cases are frequently dispersed through these various systems (McGee, Parnham, & Smith, 2000).

In neglect and dependency situations, cases often "linger" for months, if not years, waiting for an opportunity to reunite the child with the parent. During this period, the child's life is placed on "hold," separated from the parent and placed either with a relative or non-relative custodian in foster care while the parent attends treatment after treatment program with usually no apparent permanent change of behavior. For the drug dependent parent, the imminent threat of permanent termination of parental rights is not as motivating a

factor as one might expect. Given the compelling nature of addiction and the debilitating influence on the user's ability to appreciate the long-term consequences of their use, termination of parental rights often appears to be a vague process "to be dealt with" several months in the future. Addiction denies the parent appropriate foresight and forces the addict to live and survive only for the moment. Future threats, regardless of their severity, do not motivate the drug dependent individual (McGee, Parnham, & Smith, 2000).

The traditional dependency system, with its mandated periodic judicial review, does not provide a meaningful or motivating consequence for the non-complying parent. Without any enforcement mechanisms, both the court and the caseworker experience a great deal of frustration. The caseworker and the parent frequently appear to become "adversaries." The mother resents the intrusion and constant requirement imposed by the case plan and the case worker resent the persistent non-compliance by the parent, neither of whom have much recourse with the traditional approach. By the nature of the proceedings, the court's role in these cases encompasses an extremely heavy burden concerning the welfare of the child. Unlike most cases, the court is aware of the failures of the parties and the

system because of mandated periodic reviews. In a traditional proceeding, at the review, the child welfare department usually asks for the "status quo" since, in most cases, the parent has failed to abstain for a substantial period of time to justify a recommendation of reunification.

This situation is dramatically changed if the case is handled through the family drug court process. Frequent court reviews, coupled with the court's ability to impose immediate consequences, can provide the necessary motivation of the parent to attempt a lifestyle change. The relationship between the parent and the caseworker also experiences a dramatic change. With more frequent compliance, the caseworker is often viewed by the client as the core of support system. The court's perspective also changes. Instead of the traditional review hearing in which the parent is often passive or defensive, the court actually participates in a process of significant changes in the parent and observes these changes at the court hearings. All of these dynamics, of course, equate to a direct, positive and substantial benefit to the child. The reward for the court is the unification of a family in a healthy nurturing environment, which gives a child an

opportunity for a normal and productive life (McGee, Parnham, & Smith, 2000).

### Riverside County Dependency Recovery Drug Court

The Riverside County Dependency Recovery Drug Court (DRDC) target population is young parents (18 years and older) with children (ages 0 to 5 years) who live in Riverside County and have not been successful in helping themselves and their families. The overall goal of the program is to establish an integrated court based collaboration that protects children from abuse and neglect, precipitated by substance abuse in the family, through timely decisions, coordinated services, substance abuse treatment, and safe and permanent placements.

The DRDC has identified a set of specific goals and objectives to be met within the first year of operation (See figure 1). The first goal identified by the DRDC is to expand and enhance treatment services of Riverside County's Drug court for families in Dependency Court. In this effort they will establish a multi-agency steering committee to help guide the enhancement and expansion of the Dependency Court. The main focus areas are: 1) Provide Strengthening Families Program services to 160 families. 2) Assess each case weekly, bi-monthly, or monthly based



on an objective point system. 3) Document the policies and procedures that were established and/or modified to enhance the Dependency Court. 4) Adopt the ten-strength-based characteristics of effective Family Drug Court.

The second goal identified is to enhance the capacity of the Dependency Court to provide drug treatment as an alternative to loss of child custody. In this effort the DRDC will significantly improve accessibility to residential drug, alcohol treatment service and mental health services for families in Dependency Court. To provide education and employment services to improve parents' ability to care for their children.

The third goal identified by the DRDC is to conduct rigorous process and outcome evaluation to inform local and state governance about the efficacy and possible cost savings associated with the dependency drug court program and to improve family drug court operations.

The DRDC is designed with many of the same characteristics of the drug courts currently operating in criminal and family law. Supervision of each case by the court is intensified to ensure reunification goals are met. On a case-by-case basis, when safe to do so, children

stay with or are returned to their parent(s) to eliminate or minimize the adverse effects associated with removal.

As the client enters the court system the Drug Court Judge reviews and examines eligibility criteria for each parent. Preliminary information is gathered and sorted and used to determine the level of the client's substance abuse problem and whether a detailed clinical assessment is warranted. In-depth information concerning the client's substance abuse and treatment history, current conditions, emotional and physical health, family status, social roles, victimization, education, and criminal history is gathered.

The Department of Mental Health/Substance Abuse Program (DOMH/SAP) uses the Addiction Severity Index (ASI) to determine initial eligibility for the DRDC. Utilizing the ASI assessment tool, the parent is evaluated for substance abuse history and determination of current level of usage; health; criminal history and risk to re-offend; family and social history; employment and work skills; educational level; financial status; transportation and housing needs; and legal status, including an evaluation of special program terms and conditions as ordered by the court. The parent(s) are then referred to treatment and/or detoxification as needed. Eligible parents are advised of

their eligibility and potential options. If the parent chooses to participate in the DRDC they are provided with the rules and regulations of the program and sign a contract for voluntary entry into the eighteen-month program.

Once the client has been admitted into the program they are assigned a Recovery Specialist who provides intense case management and monitors each client's progress. The role of the Recovery Specialist is to support child and adult progress towards reunification. The Recovery Specialists provides the parents with the needed skills to advocate for resources and services. The Recovery Specialist works to identify needed skills and organize a Family Reunification Workshop for parents participating in the DRDC.

#### Summary

The literature important to the project was presented in Chapter Two comprises only a small sample of the growing number of drug court programs in the nation. It is impossible to make sweeping generalizations about drug courts because of the sheer numbers and the variation in the program details, in their management practices, in their screening policies, in their participants, in their

staff, in the local criminal justice system and in many other characteristics of the various jurisdictions. Nevertheless, the basic idea behind the establishment of drug courts involves some degree of treatment under supervision for certain types of substance abusers remains a general characteristic of these programs.

## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODS

#### Introduction

Chapter Three documents the steps used in implementing the research. Specifically, this section describes the methods used in conducting a process evaluation of the Riverside County, Dependency Recovery Drug Court.

#### Study Design

The purpose of this study was to evaluate how well the Riverside County implemented the key components into their newly developed Dependency Recovery Drug Court (DRDC). This research employed a self-administered questionnaire survey design as a method of data collection. Drug court administrative personnel were surveyed to assess their perception of the integration of the "Key Components." In all, 17 different individuals representing several different agency perspectives have provided information about the drug court program. Although it would have been ideal to obtain outcome measures this is not feasible due to the limited time in which to conduct this study. Furthermore, this is a newly

developed program in which outcome measures are not yet available.

The focus of the process evaluation was guided by a literature review from several different sources (Department of Justice, 1998, DCCTAP, 1997; Drug Courts Program Office, 1998). Based on this review of the literature a questionnaire-survey instrument was developed to assess the level of adaptation of two of the "Ten Key Components" of drug court to the DRDC. The instrument included a combination of quantitative and qualitative questions that provided the participants the flexibility to write comments.

This research sought to answer the following questions: 1) Is the DRDC conducting interdisciplinary education that promotes effective drug court planning? 2) Is the DRDC integrating alcohol and other drug treatment services with dependency case processing?

### Sampling

The sample for the study consisted of DRDC committee members representing 12 different agencies. The agencies represented were; Department of Public Social Services, Child Protective Services, Department of Mental Health, Mental Health\ACT, Substance Abuse Treatment, Riverside

County Superior Court, Juvenile Courts Division, County Counsel Office, Juvenile Defense Panel, Riverside County Sheriff's Department, Riverside Office of Education and WestEd. Purposive sampling was employed to collect the sample. The participants that were selected were known to be good sources of information and invaluable in determining how well the DRDC has integrated the "key components" into its program.

#### Data Collection and Instruments

The researchers collected data from a self-reported questionnaire. It took approximately 15 minutes to complete the questionnaire, which was divided into three sections. The first section included the demographics of the respondents' age, gender, ethnicity, and level of education. The next two sections assessed the respondents' perceptions of the adaptation of the key components into the program. The questions were framed in a Likert style format. The respondents were asked to respond to the questions on a scale of strongly agree to strongly disagree. The questions contained in the survey had been directly adapted from the Departments of Justice's "Defining Drug Courts: The Key Components" (1997). The questions were framed to measure the two major research

questions: 1) Is the DRDC conducting interdisciplinary education that promotes effective drug court planning? 2) Is the DRDC integrating alcohol and other drug treatment services with dependency case processing? At the end of the survey, a section was allowed for the subjects to add further comments.

The limitation of the evaluation instrument was that it had not been pre-tested; specific ratings for reliability and validity were not available. Pretests were conducted with DRDC staff, and these researchers' colleagues at the graduate level to help identify potential validity problems. The strength of the instrument, however, was that it is specific to the Riverside County Dependency Recovery Drug Court program and the needs of this study.

### Procedures

The researchers utilized multiple methods of distribution in order to maximize the possible sample size. First, the researchers emailed a packet containing a consent form (Appendix B), questionnaire and a debriefing statement (Appendix C) to the entire DRDC committee. The email contained directions on how to review the survey. The researchers then sent several follow-up emails to he



DRDC committee to encourage response. The researchers then distributed, in-person, a packet at a DRDC committee meeting. Participants were informed that all answers were confidential and only group data was used in the study. Participants were given the consent form, which described the purpose of the study and the nature of their participation. The subjects were then asked to answer the questionnaire as truthfully as possible. Subjects were informed that they were free to withdraw from the study at anytime without penalty.

The questionnaires were collected and analyzed. The data was inputted into an SPSS program and statistical analysis was conducted. The qualitative comments were compiled and synthesized.

#### Protection of Human Subjects

The confidentiality of the study participants was a primary concern of the researchers. To protect the human subjects that were involved in the study, the researchers kept all data confidential. The researchers safeguarded the confidentiality of the collected data by limiting the number of individuals who reviewed the data. The data was kept locked at the researcher's office in a locked drawer during the study. Once the questionnaires had been

collected and the data had been entered into a computer file, the questionnaires and the list of participants was destroyed. Thereafter, raw data in the computer file were identifiable only by case ID numbers.

### Data Analysis

In order to address the research questions, the data taken from the survey relating to how well the Dependency Recovery Drug Court (DRDC) implemented the two "Key concepts of drug court" into their program was analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). As the data was inputted into the SPSS, each variable was given a numerical value. These values were used to determine descriptive statistics, including the mean, median, and mode. Frequencies were obtained to determine the distribution of socio-demographics, which included age, education, gender, marital status, and number of DRDC meetings attended. Additionally, correlations were computed to assess if DRDC team members felt that the program had successfully implemented the two "key components" of drug court.

Data analysis primarily employed descriptive statistics in order to summarize the characteristics of the sample. These descriptive statistics included

univariate statistics such as frequency distributions, measurements of central tendency, and dispersion.

In addition, the comments section of the questionnaire was evaluated in order to assist in making some conclusions about the DRDC's success in adapting the key components into their program.

#### Summary

As indicated, this study intended to produce results that can be used to assist the DRDC to evaluate its success in adapting the key components into their program. Steps were taken to enhance the reliability and validity of the data and to protect the confidentiality of the participants in the study.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESULTS

#### Introduction

This section describes the results of a process evaluation of the Riverside County, Dependency Recovery Drug Court. Lastly, the Chapter concludes with a summary of the results.

#### Presentation of the Findings

In all 24 surveys were sent out to representatives from 12 different agencies. Of those 24 surveys 17 were returned (70%). The majority of respondents were female (58.8%), whereas 41.2% were male. The majority of respondents identified themselves as Caucasian (n = 9, 52.9%). Two (11.8%) were Hispanic/Latino, one African American (5.9%), and one Asian/Pacific Islander. Two of the respondents (11.8%) identified themselves as "other," and two more abstained from answering the question.

The average age of respondents was 39.6 (n = 16, one declined to answer). 18.8% of respondents stated they were under 30 years old, another 18.7% stated they were in their thirties. 25% of the respondents were between the age of 43 and 48, while the remaining 18.8% were in their fifties.

A majority (n = 10, 58.8%) of the respondents reported having a graduate/professional degree. Approximately one third (29.4%) of the respondents reported having a college degree and the remaining 11.8% of respondents stated that they had at least some college.

Finally, respondents were asked to indicate the number of committee meetings attended. Approximately half (47.1) of the respondents had only been to 1-5 meetings. One respondent had attended 6-10 meetings. The other half (47.1%) of respondents had attended more than 10 committee meetings.

#### Implementation of Key Components

Due to the limited time available to conduct the study, the evaluators decided to choose two of the ten "Key Components" that most adequately describe and evaluate how well the DRDC is implementing the "Key Components." The key components that were chosen were:

1) Is the DRDC conducting interdisciplinary education that promotes effective drug court planning? 2) Is the DRDC integrating alcohol and other drug treatment services with dependency case processing? Participants were surveyed to evaluate their perception of the implementation of the key

components. The respondents were given the opportunity to provide comments.

### Respondent Perceptions of the Drug Court Program

Question 21 on the survey asked for the respondents' overall, satisfaction of the drug court implementation process. Ninety-four point one percent ( $n = 16$ ) of the respondents stated that they were satisfied with the process. Of the remaining 20 questions eight questions on the survey related to 1) Is the DRDC conducting interdisciplinary education that promotes effective drug court planning? Twelve of the questions on the survey related to 2) Is the DRDC integrating alcohol and other drug treatment services with dependency case processing? Is the DRDC conducting interdisciplinary education that promotes effective drug court planning?

As shown in Table 1, the participants in general agreed that the DRDC was conducting interdisciplinary education in an effort to promote drug court planning. Table 1 illustrates the response percentages in descending order. It appears that the committee has attained a basic level of understanding of the drug court model. For instance, all of the respondents either strongly agreed (11.8%) or agreed (88.2) that DRDC personnel have attained

a basic understanding of the drug court model. However, when asked about specific mental health and recovery issues the response rating was not as positive. For example, almost one third (29.4%) of the respondents felt that DRDC personnel had not attained a basic understanding of the interrelationships of co-occurring conditions such as AOD abuse and mental illness (also known as "dual diagnosis"). Presented in Table 1 are the percentages of responses by category (see Table 1).

Table 1. Interdisciplinary Education Response Percentages

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Missing
1. Personnel have attained a level of basic education pertaining to the drug court model:	11.8%	88.2%	0%	0%	0%
2. Key DRDC staff have a basic knowledge of the legal requirements of the drug court program:	23.5%	70.6%	5.9%	0%	0%
3. Key DRDC personnel have a basic understanding of sensitivity to racial, cultural, ethnic, gender, and sexual orientation as they affect the operation of the drug court:	23.5%	64.7%	5.9%	0%	5.9%
4. Key DRDC personnel have a basic understanding of Federal, State, and local confidentiality requirements:	17.6%	64.7%	5.9%	5.9%	5.9%

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Missing
5. Interdisciplinary education is provided for every person involved in drug court operations to develop a shared understanding of the values, goals, and operating procedures:	17.6%	58.8%	11.8%	0%	11.8%
6. Key DRDC staff understand the dynamics of abstinence and techniques for preventing relapse:	11.8%	64.7%	11.8%	5.9%	0%
7. Key DRDC personnel understand AOD abuse and treatment:	11.8%	58.8%	23.5%	5.9%	0%
8. Key DRDC personnel have a basic understanding of the interrelationships of co-occurring conditions such as AOD abuse and mental illness (also known as "dual diagnosis"	11.8%	41.2%	29.4%	0%	17.6%

Is the DRDC integrating alcohol and other drug treatment services with dependency case processing?

As shown in Table 2, twelve of the questions were related to the integration of services. Table 2 presents the finding in descending order of agreement. The top of Table 2 shows that the DRDC appears to be using a collaborative process. For instance, all of the respondents (n = 17) agreed or strongly agreed that the planning of the DRDC had been carried out by a broad based



group and that documents defining the DRDC's mission, goals, eligibility criteria, operating procedures, and performance measures had been collaboratively developed. However, almost one-third (29.4%) of the respondents felt that the DRDC policies had not been clearly articulated and another 23.5% felt the procedures had not been clearly articulated. Presented in Table 2 are the percentages of responses by category (see Table 2).

Table 2. Integration of Services Percentages

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Missing
9. Documents defining the DRDC's mission, goals, eligibility criteria, operating procedures, and performance measures have been collaboratively developed, reviewed, and agreed upon:	52.9%	47.1%	0%	0%	0%
10. The DRDC Judge responds to each participant's positive efforts as well as to noncompliance behavior:	35.3%	64.7%	0%	0%	0%
11. Initial and ongoing planning of the DRDC has been carried out by a broad-based group:	58.8%	35.3%	0%	0%	5.9%
12. The DRDC has clearly articulated its drug testing standards and procedures:	23.5%	70.6%	0%	0%	5.9%
13. The DRDC's goals are clearly articulated:	11.8%	70.6%	5.9%	5.9%	5.9%

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Missing
14. The court and treatment providers maintain frequent exchanges of timely and accurate information about the individual participant's overall program performance:	41.2%	41.2%	5.9%	0%	11.8%
15. The court and treatment providers maintain ongoing communication:	29.4%	52.9%	11.8%	0%	5.9%
16. The DRDC Judge plays an active role in the treatment process, including frequently reviewing of treatment progress:	29.4%	52.9%	11.8%	0%	5.9%
17. The DRDC has clearly articulated its responses to relapse and to noncompliance with other program requirements:	11.8%	70.6%	11.8%	5.9%	0%
18. Mechanisms for sharing decision making and resolving conflicts among DRDC team members have been established:	11.8%	58.8%	17.6%	5.9%	5.9%
19. The DRDC's procedures are clearly articulated:	5.9%	70.6%	23.5%	0%	0%
20. The DRDC's policies are clearly articulated:	11.8%	58.8%	29.4%	0%	0%

Researchers ran a cross tabulation between number of group meetings attended and the questions on the survey. The meetings were grouped into categories of 0-5 meetings attended and 6 or more meetings attended. Approximately half (47.1%) of the respondents had attended 1-5 meetings and the other half (52.9%) of respondents had attended

more than 10 committee meetings. Utilizing Pearson's R, a level of significance  $\alpha = .021$  was found between the number of group meetings attended and question number nineteen in Table #2, "The DRDC's procedures are clearly articulated." It appears that the more meetings committee members attended the less satisfied they felt with the development of the procedures.

#### Qualitative Data

The participants were given a space to make comments after each question on the survey. Out of the 17 participants that were surveyed, five participants made comments on 12 of the 21 questions.

A comment made on question #7 in Table 1, "Key DRDC personnel understand AOD abuse and treatment," was consistent with the response percentages of the survey. The respondent wrote "Attorneys and Commissioner are not as informed as they should be," which is consistent with the 29.4% of respondents that disagreed with the above statement.

Comments made on question #8 in Table 1, "Key DRDC personnel have a basic understanding of the interrelationships of co-occurring conditions such as AOD abuse and mental illness (also known as "dual diagnosis)," is consistent with the response percentages of the survey.

The respondents wrote "Training is needed in this area; More info for all is needed to make better decisions in acceptance and noncompliance; Has not come up in the meetings I have attended" which is consistent with the 29.4% that disagreed with the above statement and the 17.6% that abstained from answering the question.

A comment was made on question #18 in Table # 2, "Mechanisms for sharing decision making and resolving conflicts among DRDC team members have been established." A respondent wrote " A formal process may be helpful," which is consistent with the 23.5% that disagreed with the above statement and the 5.9% that abstained from answering the question.

Furthermore, participants were given an overall section to make comments at the end of the survey. In all 4 participants made comments in this section, they wrote that overall they were satisfied with the DRDC procedures and communication.

#### Summary

Chapter Four reviewed the results extracted from the project. In all, 17 different individuals representing 12 different agency perspectives provided information about the drug court program for this study. Results indicated

that although the program was relatively new, drug court team members believed that the program had adapted the two "key components" of drug court successfully into their program. Overall, the respondents felt that they had attained a basic level of understanding of the drug court model, and that they had worked well in the collaborative process.

The results also revealed some areas of needed improvement. One-third of the respondents felt that the DRDC needed more education and training in areas related to mental illness and the disease of addiction. Furthermore, one-third of the respondent's felt that the policies and procedures had not been clearly articulated. The implications of these results are further discussed in Chapter five.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### DISCUSSION

#### Introduction

Included in Chapter Five is a presentation of the conclusions drawn as a result of completing the project. Further, the limitations of the project are discussed, as well as recommendations for social work practice, policy and research are presented. Lastly, the Chapter concludes with a summary.

#### Discussion

The Riverside County, Dependency Recovery Drug Court was established approximately six months ago. This program is based on the "Key Components" (Department of Justice, 1997) and has three program phases that take a client approximately 12 months to complete. At the time of data collection the DRDC had only three active participants, therefore the evaluators chose to conduct a process evaluation. More specifically, this project evaluated the perceptions of the DRDC staff in effort to identify how successful the DRDC planning committee had been in implementing two of the "key components" identified by the Department of Justice. The two components chosen for this

project were "integration of services/collaboration" and "interdisciplinary education."

In regards to "integration of services," it appears that the DRDC is working well as a collaborative. The responses related to collaboration were overwhelmingly positive. However, almost one-third of the respondents felt that the DRDC policies and procedures had not been clearly articulated. Furthermore, nearly one-fifth of the respondents felt they had not clearly articulated responses to relapse and non-compliance. Leading these researchers to conclude that although the respondents felt that they worked well together as a collaborative, they had not been successful in completing the task of clearly articulating the procedures. It is common when working in a collaborative effort with representatives from multiple agencies that the process becomes more important than the achievement of the task. While the process of "team building" is important it is also critical that goals and tasks be achieved in a timely manner.

The collaboration and the communication between the various players in the drug court program are vital to the success of the drug court program. It enables the judge to create a system of accountability where there usually is none, accountability on the part of the participants as

well as the service providers. In turn, participants are accountable in a system, which previously, has been unaccountable to them, as well. System accountability can also produce results notwithstanding limited resources. Coordination among all agencies is critical. The integration of these services through a drug court program can identify "gaps" in the system which can be filled by a cooperative effort as opposed to the traditional "finger pointing" response.

From the literature review conducted for this project we can clearly see the importance of using a collaborative process in the planning stage. However, when working with large planning groups the completion of task and the decision making cycle may take longer than preferred. Also, it is very common that these large planning groups become lost more in the process of meeting rather than in the task of doing. It may then be recommended that an agenda be constructed for each meeting and timeframe be placed for each item on the agenda. This allows for a healthy discussion and yet it sets boundaries keeping the discussion focussed.

Eight questions in the survey were designed to measure "interdisciplinary education." It appears that the DRDC committee has a basic understanding of the drug court



model, legal requirements and cultural issues. However, many of the respondents felt that the DRDC committee does not understand the disease of addiction and the recovery process. Another area of weakness appeared to be the DRDC understanding of co-occurring conditions such as AOD abuse and mental illness (also known as "dual diagnosis.")

As a multi disciplinary team all members come with a different expertise. This expertise may not be in the field of mental health and/or substance abuse. Drug court practitioners must recognize that the situations that are bringing many parents under the court's jurisdiction are often complicated, and are often multi-generational. It is necessary that all "team" members recognize the disease of addiction and have a basic understanding of the recovery process. All activity generated by the drug court must be designed to have therapeutic value, including the interaction between "treatment" and "court" processes which should be on-going.

#### Limitations

The limitations of this approach include generalizability across time and programs. The evaluation was specifically for the period between October 1, 2002 and March 31, 2003. Changes that occur after this point in

time are not reflected. Also, the representatives surveyed may or may not have reflected all attitudes toward this drug court program. One other limitation is the small sample size. In addition, the limitation of the instrument was that it had not been pre-tested; specific ratings for reliability and validity were not available. Furthermore, this study was limited because of the lack of observational data. Due to the program being fairly new it was not feasible to interview or survey clients to obtain their perspective of the drug court. Additionally, the study was limited to one survey rather than an on-going evaluation.

#### Recommendations for Social Work Practice, Policy and Research

This research impacts social work on various levels. For the social work practice, this research offers empirical data reflecting the impact of substance abuse on the child welfare system. It is hoped that this research will have a direct and positive impact on the services offered to parents struggling with addiction. Any opportunity for an individual to access substance abuse treatment is an opportunity to affect individual as well as societal change. Social workers can use the information

contained in this research to aid them in making decisions regarding the individual's treatment plan.

In terms of social work practice on an agency level, this project provides useful information to the Riverside County Dependency Recovery Drug Court (DRDC) in terms of meeting the needs of future and current clients. Based on the research findings from this study the researchers make the following recommendations.

The DRDC conduct a more thorough approach to interdisciplinary education as it pertains to AOD, mental illness, and understanding working with dual diagnosis clients. This would assist all key DRDC personnel in understanding the disease of addiction and process of relapse and recovery. As stated previously, the DRDC is composed of a multi disciplinary team of whom 58.8% had graduate or professional degrees. However, it is likely that many of the members did not specialize in mental health and/or substance abuse treatment.

It is further recommended that the DRDC committee revisit the procedures to assure that they have been clearly articulated. Once again this may be one of the difficulties in working with a multi-disciplinary team. Each discipline has its own "language" and defining a common language may be one solution to this obstacle. The

other is understanding group process and finding a way to facilitate the meetings in a way that builds relationships (process) but also completes the task.

This study may also have a favorable impact on fundraising efforts by demonstrating that the DRDC holds itself accountable to its clients by looking at itself critically. This is important in competing for limited resources and funding available in our changing social welfare system.

In terms of social work research, this project will contribute to the relatively small body of literature on the effectiveness of applying the criminal drug court model to family drug court. In evaluating the effectiveness of drug court, researchers have often relied on only the program outcomes such as termination, graduation, and recidivism rates. In contrast, a process evaluation can provide a clearer and more comprehensive picture of how the drug court procedures are being implemented. Therefore, it is recommended that the benchmarks are articulated in the survey as well as the all 10 key components of drug court and be reviewed by the committee on an on-going basis to ensure successful implementation.

Family or Dependency drug are relatively new and there has not been a sufficient period of operation to document significant results over the long term. However, family drug courts are reporting that their initial experience confirms remarkable sustained turnaround by parents in the program, who were otherwise at high risk for continued, escalating substance abuse. Such indicators as recidivism, drug usage, education achievement, and family preservation, either through retention or through regaining custody, should be measured to assess the true outcomes and potential of family drug courts.

### Conclusions

In summary, results of the process evaluation found that although this drug court program is new, it is highly regarded program locally. Although this process evaluation was conducted at an early phase in the implementation process it appears that overall the program has been effective in meeting its implementation goals. The program appears to be following the principles of the "Key Components" (Department of Justice, 1997) closely on both a daily basis as well as in future planning. The feedback from each of the agency representatives surveyed was overwhelmingly positive. The drug court seems to be

functioning by its motto "Reclaiming our families . . . one at a time" and truly strives to provide an opportunity to better individuals' lives as well as the community in which the program is grounded.

While the respondents felt strongly that the committee members were working well together it appears that there were some areas that needed continued improvement. Interagency education should be provided to all group members, specifically in the area of mental health and substance abuse issues. Furthermore, a common language should be developed in an effort to more clearly articulate the program's procedures.

This process evaluation provides an excellent foundation for this program to take the next steps in following through on their outcomes evaluation. In addition, updating the process evaluation on an annual basis might also be important. This process evaluation approach provided in-depth multi-perspective analysis of existing perceptions and attitudes regarding different aspects of this drug court program through the stated period of time. It is the hope of the evaluators that the knowledge gained from this study will be used to help motivate and guide the committee in its further operations.

APPENDIX A  
QUESTIONNAIRE

Survey Questionnaire  
A Process Evaluation of the Riverside County  
Dependency Recovery Drug Court

Introduction:

You have been selected to take part in this study because we are interested in assessing the process of the implementation of the DRDC program. We are interested in finding out your perceptions of the following statements. This questionnaire will begin with some information about you.

We would appreciate your honest and thoughtful answers to these questions. Please be assured that answers are confidential. Your name will not appear on this questionnaire and there will be no way to identify you with the answers that you give to the questions that follow. In other words, you do not have to worry that the agency or County staff will know your individual answers.

Your participation in this study is voluntary and you do not have to answer any or all of these questions if you do not want to. If you do choose to participate you should keep in mind that this is not a test; there are no right or wrong answers. We hope you will answer these questions as truthfully as possible so that we can get an honest assessment of the Dependency Recovery Drug Court program.

Section I:

Please provide the following information:

1. Age \_\_\_\_\_
2. Gender
  - a. Male
  - b. Female
3. Ethnicity
  - a. African American
  - b. Caucasian
  - c. Asian/Pacific Islander
  - d. Hispanic/Latino
  - e. Other



4. Marital Status
  - a. Married
  - b. Divorced
  - c. Single
  - d. Other
5. Highest Education Level:
  - a. high school degree
  - b. some college
  - c. college degree
  - d. graduate or professional degree
6. The number of DRDC meetings you have attended:
  - a. 0
  - b. 1 - 5
  - c. 6 – 10
  - d. more than 10

## Section II:

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements by circling your choice:

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
21. Personnel have attained a level of basic education pertaining to the drug court model:	1	2	3	4
22. The DRDC's goals are clearly articulated:	1	2	3	4
23. The DRDC's policies are clearly articulated:	1	2	3	4
24. The DRDC's procedures are clearly articulated:	1	2	3	4
25. Key DRDC personnel understand AOD abuse and treatment:	1	2	3	4
26. Key DRDC staff understand the dynamics of abstinence and techniques for preventing relapse:	1	2	3	4
27. The DRDC has clearly articulated its responses to relapse and to noncompliance with other program requirements:	1	2	3	4
28. Key DRDC staff have a basic knowledge of the legal requirements of the drug court program:	1	2	3	4
29. The DRDC has clearly articulated its drug testing standards and procedures:	1	2	3	4
30. Key DRDC personnel have a basic understanding of sensitivity to racial, cultural, ethnic, gender, and sexual orientation as they affect the operation of the drug court:	1	2	3	4
31. Key DRDC personnel have a basic understanding of the interrelationships of co-occurring conditions such as AOD abuse and mental illness (also known as "dual diagnosis"):	1	2	3	4

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
32. Key DRDC personnel have a basic understanding of Federal, State, and local confidentiality requirements:	1	2	3	4
33. Initial and ongoing planning of the DRDC has been carried out by a broad-based group:	1	2	3	4
34. Documents defining the DRDC's mission, goals, eligibility criteria, operating procedures, and performance measures have been collaboratively developed, reviewed, and agreed upon:	1	2	3	4
35. The court and treatment providers maintain ongoing communication:	1	2	3	4
36. The court and treatment providers maintain frequent exchanges of timely and accurate information about the individual participant's overall program performance:	1	2	3	4
37. The DRDC Judge plays an active role in the treatment process, including frequently reviewing of treatment progress:	1	2	3	4
38. The DRDC Judge responds to each participant's positive efforts as well as to noncompliant behavior:	1	2	3	4
39. Interdisciplinary education is provided for every person involved in drug court operations to develop a shared understanding of the values, goals, and operating procedures:	1	2	3	4
40. Mechanisms for sharing decision making and resolving conflicts among DRDC team members have been established:	1	2	3	4
41. Overall, I am satisfied with the implementation process of the DRDC:	1	2	3	4

Section III:

The space below has been provided for you to make any comments that you feel would be useful in the assessment of the DRDC.

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

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Thank you for participation.

APPENDIX B  
INFORMED CONSENT

### **Oral Informed Consent**

I am asked to participate in this research study that is designed to measure how well Riverside County Dependency Recovery Drug Court is able to integrate the key components into its' program. This study is being conducted by Phil Breitenbucher and Sean Sullivan, graduate students of social work at California State University at San Bernardino under the supervision of Dr. Nancy Mary, Professor at California State University at San Bernardino. This study has been approved by the Department of Social Work Human Subject Review Board, California State University, San Bernardino.

In this study I will be asked about my social, economic status. I will also be asked questions about the Dependency Recovery Drug court program itself. This survey will take approximately 15 minutes to complete.

I understand my participation in this study will be totally voluntary. I can refuse to participate in, or withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. I also understand that I do not have to answer any question that I may not wish to answer. When I am done filling out the survey, I will be given a debriefing statement.

If I have any questions about the study, I can contact Dr. Nancy Mary at California State University, San Bernardino, the Department of Social Work, 5500 University Parkway, San Bernardino, California 92407 or call her at (909) 880-5560.

I acknowledge that I have been informed of, and that I understand, the nature and purpose of the study, and I freely consent to participate. I also acknowledge that I am at least 18 years of age.

### **Agency Informed Consent**

Riverside County Dependency Recovery Drug Court (DRDC) is asked to participate in this research study that is designed to measure how well Riverside County Dependency Recovery Drug Court is able to integrate the key components into its' program. This study is being conducted by Phil Breitenbucher and Sean Sullivan, graduate students of social work at California State University at San Bernardino under the supervision of Dr. Nancy Mary, Professor at California State University at San Bernardino. This study has been approved by the sub committee of Social Work Department Institutional Review Board, California State University, San Bernardino.

The DRDC agrees to be asked questions about the Dependency Recovery Drug court program. This survey will take approximately 15 minutes to complete.

The DRDC understands that its participation in this study will be totally voluntary. That it can refuse to participate in, or withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. The DRDC understand that its committee members do not have to answer any question that they may not wish to answer. When the participant is done filling out the survey, a debriefing statement will be given to the participant.

If the DRDC, or its committee members have any questions about the study, they can contact Dr. Nancy Mary at California State University, San Bernardino, the Department of Social Work, 5500 University Parkway, San Bernardino, California 92407 or call her at (909) 880-5560.

The DRDC acknowledges that it has been informed of, and that it understands, the nature and purpose of the study, and it freely consents to participate.

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Signature of Agency Representative

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Date

APPENDIX C  
DEBRIEFING STATEMENT



### Debriefing Statement

The study you have just completed was designed to investigate how well the DRDC has conducted interdisciplinary education that promotes effective drug court planning and how well the DRDC integrated alcohol and other drug treatment services with dependency case processing.

Thank you for participating in this study and for not discussing the contents of the survey with other people.

If you feel uncomfortable or distressed as a result of participating in this study, referrals are available to local mental health agencies.

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## ASSIGNED RESPONSIBILITIES PAGE

This was a two-person project where authors collaborated throughout. However, for each phase of the project, certain authors took primary responsibility. These responsibilities were assigned in the manner listed below.

1. Data Collection:

Team Effort: Phil Breitenbucher & Sean Sullivan

2. Data Entry and Analysis:

Team Effort: Phil Breitenbucher & Sean Sullivan

3. Writing Report and Presentation of Findings:

- a. Introduction and Literature

Team Effort: Phil Breitenbucher & Sean Sullivan

- b. Methods

Team Effort: Phil Breitenbucher & Sean Sullivan

- c. Results

Team Effort: Phil Breitenbucher & Sean Sullivan

- d. Discussions

Team Effort: Phil Breitenbucher & Sean Sullivan